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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a doctoral thesis defended and published in Swedish in 1991 at the Malmo School of Education, University of Lund. The thesis examined the preconditions necessary for the development of a new profession in Sweden for the education and care of young children in the 19th century. These preconditions led to the creation, in the early 20th century, of kindergartens for working-class Swedish families. The study focused on the period 1904-1944, from the origin of the first privately-funded kindergarten for the working-class, until the beginning of state provision of kindergarten education. The work and lives of Ellen and Maria Moberg, who founded the first kindergarten, and a training school for kindergarten teachers known as the Froebel Institute, are also chronicled. The thesis concludes that kindergarten teaching developed as a female profession due to its association with child rearing and home life. The kindergarten could also be seen as a well-arranged home for children or, by its critics, as a provocation to the sovereignty of the family. To reform-minded liberals in the early 20th century, kindergarten was viewed as an instrument for changing and improving home life and child-rearing practices among the working class. (MDM)

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WHEN WORK WAS ITS OWN REWARD: A SWEDISH STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN'S HISTORY, OF THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER AS PUBLIC EDUCATOR

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WHEN WORK WAS ITS OWN REWARD: A SWEDISH STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN'S HISTORY, OF THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER AS PUBLIC EDUCATOR

Ingegerd Tallberg Broman

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The present report is a summary of a doctoral thesis, published in Swedish and defended at the Malmö School of Education. (Title in Swedish: "När arbetet var lönen. En kvinnohistorisk studie av barnträdgårdsledarinnan som folkuppfostrare", 1991, pp. 323.)

The thesis deals with the preconditions for the development of a new profession for caring for and education of small children, i.e. the kindergarten teacher. With the circumstances surrounding the construction of this new profession as perspectives, the role of the professionals and the relationship between them and the children's homes (mothers) are analyzed.

The Kindergarten movement can be seen as an international movement of importance, corresponding to two essential themes and/or needs of the time: on the one hand, education, on the other the construction of female professions.

Educating the mothers of the children and reforming the homes were important goals of the early froebelian ideology. The difficult struggle to establish a legitimate female profession and to introduce a new concept of child education is however more conspicuous in this Swedish example.

Keywords: Early childhood education, educational history, Froebel, kindergarten, parent education, pre-school teachers, social history, women's studies.

When work was its own reward: A Swedish study from the perspective of women´s history, of the kindergarten teacher as public educator.

Introduction

The development of Swedish society during the 19th century led to a radically changed situation for the family. Industrialisation and urbanisation implied new conditions for reproductive work – for caring for children, old, and sick people. The upbringing of children through early participation in a working partnership normally took place relatively early in each household, within the context of a traditional, religious-based structure. Urbanisation partly destroyed this framework, and also initiated a number of separation processes which were to have a great impact on the conditions of growing up for children.

Under the new circumstances, work and the home/household were separated, this being especially distinct in the work of males. Men, women, and children found themselves in different working and living conditions. Women and men even became competitors in some fields of work, their individual contributions no longer forming necessary parts in a totality, or aspects of mutual production. The men found a clear position in working life – they belonged to the outer sphere, the social.

For many women, however, their role in production was unclear. The woman belonged, in the first hand, to the home, and it was preferably there that her work ought to be placed. But, in the new situation, economic circumstances demanded that she must also seek other solutions. Possibilities for females working were being constructed – especially for the working class woman, and female jobs were created – especially for the daughters of the middle classes. Among such tasks was work concerned with reproduction; for example, the caring for and education of children. Here, jobs and professions were constructed which both attempted to gradually fill the emptiness created by the new construction of society as well as to develop and structure those reproductive duties with new meanings and goals. Thus, the job of kindergarten teacher was constructed. It symbolizes the beginning of society's takeover of the reproductive functions of the home, which has been carried out – and structured – during the 20th century.

This thesis deals with the circumstances surrounding the construction of

this profession – the kindergarten teacher – and, with these circumstances as perspectives, the study focuses on the role of the professional kindergarten teacher and the relationship between the professionals and the children's mothers and families.

Delimitations

Time period

The specific time period which is treated in this study includes the years 1904-1944. In the spring of 1904 the first kindergarten which was directly designated for the children of working class parents was opened in Sweden, in Norrköping, by the sisters Ellen and Maria Moberg. Here it was intended that the children would have access to good social-educational surroundings. But the aim was not only to reach the children – their mothers were also important recipients of the kindergarten message. Through the kindergartens they would also be provided with guidance and support for the upbringing of their children, and for their own development as mothers, a goal supported by frequent meetings between the kindergarten staff and the mothers.

Private initiative and economic support were necessary preconditions for the survival and success of the kindergartens from their beginnings up to the late advent of an interest by the state in 1944. At that time, the first state support was provided to kindergartens and nursery schools in Sweden. Simultaneously, the organisation representing the kindergarten teachers changed its name to The Association of Swedish Kindergarten Teachers. This organisation, which had until then been built upon a common interest, was transformed into a trade union, negotiating with employers for the rights of its members; the change implied a quite different relationship between the kindergarten teachers and their employers than had previously existed. This period of 40 years can be seen as a breeding ground for later events; it was of great importance for future developments, including those of our own time.

Subjects

In order to do an interpretative, historical analysis of this period, the works and lives of Ellen and Maria Moberg – and their circle, with Alva Myrdal representing a limit to the "new age" – are utilized as a mirror for

a number of specifically focused questions.

The work of Ellen and Maria Moberg was developed in Norrköping – a city dominated by the working class, especially by female laborers in the textile industry. Here, in their hometown, the Mobergs started both the first common kindergarten and a training school for kindergarten teachers – known as the Froebel Institute – which was to become the most influential such school in Sweden during the first decades of the 20th century.

They also founded, together with other leading persons in the history of the child education, the Swedish Froebel-Union. A magazine was also produced which had a uniting and communicative function for the members of this association. This magazine appeared for the first time in the year 1918, and it is still in production today, with the title Förskolan (The Kindergarten). Ellen and Maria Moberg are recognized as pioneers in their field, being forerunners in Swedish child care and education.

This study can be said to deal with a field on the margin between the private and public spheres, between home and school, education and care, as well as between nature and culture. The development of theory in this field is limited, and theoretical concepts of value for understanding and explanation have to be sought in all of these various areas. The problem represents a dynamic field, and a perspective including conflict, and emphasizing factors correlated to gender, is necessary.

Methods

This thesis is being written within the context of a tradition of hermeneutic theory of science. The study depends on the analysis and interpretation of texts – of words – most of which were formulated at a time already past.

The selection of data has followed the principle that it should provide as much knowledge, and as comprehensive a view of the problem as is possible, within the limitations that have been stated above. The ambition has been to choose sources from different origins and of different kinds. Interviews, archive materials, and magazine texts, together with literature

from the field, are being used as data. Letters – about 300 – from Ellen and Maria Moberg have proven to be one of the most important sources of data.

The data are mainly of a qualitative nature, and provide results in the form of tendencies and patterns. They are also on a level rather close to the major actors. A both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the magazine, The Kindergarten, started in 1918, is carried out, thereby making it possible to illustrate how common certain tendencies and themes were. Such an analysis is especially interesting in that it indicates how patterns changed during the period of time studied.

Interviews have been conducted with individuals who have considerable knowledge concerning the structure of Swedish child education. The selection of interview subjects was not decided at the initiation of the study. The process has instead been influenced by a steadily growing knowledge of the problem area, and a concomitantly increasing insight as to which informants would be most appropriate. These interview subjects are on the same level as Ellen and Maria Moberg: they constitute the leadership of the movement, and all data, discussion, and conclusions originate from this level.

Conclusions and discussion

1. Prerequisites for the development of a new female profession for caring and education, directed both to younger children and to their mothers

The social developments of the 19th century, with its changing conditions for work, living, and family situations, constituted a very important background for the growth of new roles for middle class women.

The dominant ideology of gender which permeated society at that time determined a woman's predisposition for her home and children. There was also a growing, mostly liberal, belief in the possiblilities of education. By educating the children, "the people", it would be possible to change society and form a better and more harmonious future. The kindergarten movement grew in this context. The pioneers were not in opposition to the

ideology of a basic inequality of gender; instead they used its concepts for their own purposes: to construct an appropriate profession for women and an educational environment for children. They agreed with the woman's disposition for home and children, but saw that it could be applied to an extended concept of home and children. The kindergarten should be like a home, and the kindergarten teachers were spiritual housewives and mothers.

Froebel doctrine and male protection

The German pedagog Friedrich Froebel had a great influence on the development of the kindergarten teachers' profession. In his metaphysically permeated doctrine, he formulated the idea of the importance of childhood, of the child's play and self-activity, and of the immense impact of women on the upbringing of children. Froebel emphazised the necessity of educating mothers and restructuring home and family life – in order to be able to construct a good childhood, on which the whole future of the nation was then seen to rest.

The denotations Froebel formed, with sutfixes such as -institute, -pedagogy, and -friends, were used frequently. They can be considered as key symbols, having both a summarizing and an elaborating function. Such a symbol identifies the members of a particular group and indicates both an affiliation to that group and a delimitation from others. It structures thoughts and makes an orientation in reality possible, and it expresses an attitude to the speaker's surroundings, including the mothers and their children.

The magazine and the Swedish and Nordic meetings

Early on, various examples of the kindergarten movement, in different parts of the world, focused on publishing their own magazines. Such was also the case in Sweden with the production of the Swedish Froebel Union's magazine,The Kindergarten, from the year 1918. I consider this magazine a very important instrument for the communication of unity, knowledge, and ideology. It had, together with very well-attended both Swedish and Nordic meetings, a great influence on the modelling of the new profession.

The training schools – for the training of hand, brain and heart

The kindergarten movement was developed by women. Froebel had emphazised the special gift of women for education, and the German Froebel pioneer Henriette Goldschmidt built on this theme, saying that women had a special calling for educational tasks. A "calling" was associated with inner capabities which should be cultivated. The denotation can also be seen as a female strategy, one which offered women a more acceptable entrance into professional life than had the transition been simply the result of their own personal choice.

To influence "the female potential" training schools/colleges for kindergarten teachers were established during the last half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The training was concerned with the knowledge, as well as with the suitability, of the female trainee. Knowledge and personality – "hand, brain, and heart" – were seen as inseparable parts of the female task. A special spirit was formed in this new collective of women, now emancipiated from their own families. Characteristically, the headmistress of each these schools took a great deal of responsibility for the way of life of her pupils, thereby adopting a kind of fostering – and controlling – motherhood toward her pupils, as well as toward her staff members.

The solidarity between the women and the new messages that were being conveyed to them offered a possibility for a new understanding of life and view of one's own potentialities. The sense of community ("we froebelians") and identity provided support and shelter during an ardous phase in the construction of child caring and education which was being shaped at that time. The training schools gave legitimacy to the mission.

The early kindergarten teachers' colleges exhibited a great deal of independence and played a very dominant role in the construction of the goals, content, and organisation of social-educational activities. They represented mainly an oral culture, kept together by home-, child-, and woman-centered values, and a common language, where confirming quotations and symbolic expressions were included. They represented a culture which was screened-off from the rest of the school system, and from the male public sphere.

This education was also considered a good and adequate preparation for

marriage. The parents who sent their young daughters to these colleges (i.e. those who by their subscriptions often paid for the associated children's institutions) surely hoped that their daughters, by means of this education, were obtaining good preparation for future family life, rather than for being professional women. This ambiguity of expectations also influenced the content of the education.

The training of kindergarten teachers was greatly inspired by Froebel during the first decade of the 20th century. During the 1930s criticism grew against this direction and dominance. The democratization of society, a changing family situation, and new ideological and scientific influences were contributing to the shaping of a new point of departure for the constructors of female childcare.

A segregated world

The initiative, development, and change of the Swedish kindergarten movement have to a great extent been a separate internal concern of the movement itself. How these conditions have influenced the structure of "the Swedish model" should be of great interest for future students of the field. By preserving a female-oriented, half-private, relational-directed, and home-like character, it now presents a profile quite different from that found in many institutions of child education in other countries.

The kindergarten movement is a pronounced female movement, representing a rather isolated woman's world, with few so-called "friends" on the outside. It is filled by female attributes, female language, and female values. Its institutions bear the character of homes; and the educations offfered to children – as well as that given to the female teacher trainees – are distinctively different from those to be found in the public school system. This world of children and women, and its definitions, implies that men have actively been held outside. An apparently mutual maintainance of a conservative attitude to gender has preserved this segregation on many levels. Here it seems as if a shared interest in border guards exists. Those who are inside the territory guard against encroachment and tendencies toward direction and control, while those who are outside consider the territory as an acceptable, but bounded, area for female activity and emancipation.

Very few attempts have been made from the male side to treat this world

as a 'egitimate field for activity, study, and/or research. In the history of child education, very few signs of interest have been shown by representatives for the state, educational/school organisations, or the scientific community in entering or even approaching this field. Theoretical development and research about child care and education have been very limited, because these tasks have not been given priority either among participants in these activities or by the representatives of science. This lack of relevant, theoretical interpretation and understanding has obvious, negative consequences for the development and stability of the institutions of child care and education.

2. The kindergarten, a well arranged home and a provocation to the sovereign family

The kindergarten movement can be seen as an international movement of importance, corresponding to two essential themes and/or needs of the time: on the one hand, education, on the other, the construction of female professions. Those women who developed the movement were usually of bourgeois origins. With them they brought a female bourgeois supervisory role to the kindergarten. This role was subsequently transformed in its meeting with new functions, but managed to preserve its previous, principal task – that of guidance and supervision. The kindergarten is structured like a home. It is not like the rooms, buildings, equipment, organisation, and ways of working found in the school system. Instead, it is filled with pictures, colors, flowers, curtains – and order. It is a model for the homes of the children, and the kindergarten teachers are its administrators. Their development of the role of the bourgeois woman can be considered as a form of neoculturation. Face-to-face with a new social reality, these women had to seek new patterns for their lives.

The Swedish kindergarten movement took most of its inspiration from Germany. The Pestalozzi-Froebel Haus, constructed by Henriette Schrader Breyman, was a common training institution and source of ideas for representatives from both Europe and the USA. Through the propagation to many countries of this womens' movement – as the struggle for the establishment of the kindergartens and a new profession for caring and education can be regarded – the history of child education shows much similarity during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th

century. It represents a general example of women's history.

The Froebel pedagogy included great ambitions to reform the family and upbringing within the family. This aim implied a provocation against the sovereign family, in which each individual is his or her own master, with a closed door to the environment, to the public. My opinion is that Froebel, this slightly odd and remarkable man, can be seen as indirectly attacking a patriarchal principle in his wish to give, especially to mothers, increased knowledge and understanding of the care for and development of the small child. The effects of an expanded child care outside the home has, in itself, very deep-going consequences for a patriarchal society. The foundations of the patriarchy – the male control of female work, as well as of female sexuality and reproduction – are threatened when the transferance of caring for the children emancipates female workers and reduces the possibility of controlling their lives. This background can be seen as having an important influence on the resistance that was met, and even today still confronts the establishment and development of these social-educational child institutions. Such thoughts as these were, however, surely far from those of Froebel in his idealistic wish to shape a better childhood by constructing a "paradise of childhood" – a kindergarten.

Pestalozzi-Froebel Haus has managed this heritage with play, songs, games, and gifts, all of which constituted integral parts in the froebelian aspiration for an increased unity of life (Lebenseinigung), and a better, more moral life. The pedagogy was further developed under the leadership of H. Schrader and it was given a more practical direction. The work of the children was concentrated to a core curriculum for 3-4 weeks. House duties, tasks, and gardening provide the children with a good preparation for work and for caring for home and nature. All the content in the kindergarten shows a continuing ambition for education. Every song and finger game has a message. For example, high estimations of home and family, of father and mother, are communicated. The kindergarten teachers also manage to weave into their messages the value of work, and to emphasize order, cleanliness, and thankfulness towards Nature and Creation.

The kindergartens were mostly established in the cities, in factory, mining, and industrial districts. The changes caused by industrialisation and urbanisation in the social structure and its unifying elements led to

instability in society. In the kindergartens, however, order was emphazised, and chaos was counteracted. Tradition and permanance were stressed, and the young children from the cities were presented with an agricultural and manual culture. They were offered a kind of reserve, the children's garden, where the seasons, nature, gardening, the work of the hands, and play had much space and many possibilities.

In the Pestalozzi-Froebel House, and through Schrader, the development of a kindergarten directed to the children and mothers of the working class was stimulated. In Sweden, Ellen and Maria Moberg were its advocates, and they worked asiduosly for its establishment and propagation. With the general kindergarten the home could be reformed based upon the working model of Schrader, where half of the kindergarten teacher's work consisted of activities among the parents.

3. The kindergarten – an instrument for changing home and upbringing

F. Froebel had drawn attention to the work with the parents as a foundation stone in the kindergarten. I consider the need for change of the home and upbringing as one of the principal motives for the establishment of the kindergarten. It was not a consequence of work with the children, but represents, rather, one of the most important – and in this study sought-after – preconditions for the establishment of the child care institutions. It was a way to reach the families – especially the mothers. As Froebel's ambition concerned all mothers, it is obvious that the mothers of the upper classes were also included. Froebel's thoughts about family reorganisation, of reformation via work with the parents, met great difficulties when transformed into practice, however. In the kindergartens which were addressed to the more privilieged families, this part of the work was often poorly developed. This mission had to be transformed in the meeting with social reality. The borders of the family were here more obvious and even more pronounced, in the context of a meeeting with an institution such as the kindergarten, which claimed priority of knowledge about children and about appropriate child-training.

Mothers' meetings, parties, and parents' meetings
In the general kindergarten the limits between home and institution appear

easier to cross. The method recommended by Schrader – of working with frequent home visits, of a guiding character – is only to be found documented in a few examples from the Swedish data, however. The work was mostly structured in the form of mothers' meetings. The content of these was both support of social community, in the form of songs, plays, and coffee hours, and education, in the form of short lectures and moral stories. The mothers' meetings were supplemented with parties or celebrations, where the children often took an active part in songs and fairy tales, and with parents' meetings, where the level of arrangement was "higher" than at the more unifying mothers' meetings. In this context, a clear, given cultural hegemony was evident regarding the family. The kindergarten teachers were seen to possess both the requsite knowledge about what needed be known, and a priority of interpretation; from the resultant self-understanding they were then able to carry on a kind of cultural and pedagogical missionary activity.

The family and the home are very much present in the kindergarten. Songs, games, and core curricula carry an estimation of the family in their texts. In the design of the early kindergarten the work was directed both to the home and to the children. Variations in the kindergarten teachers' actions were nevertheless great; notwithstanding accurate, methodological models, each teacher still had significant freedom and opportunities to structure her tasks as best she saw fit and could manage.

The kindergarten institution regarded the home and the family as the mainstay of upbringing, an unavoidable fact, if one wished a real change in human life and the future. The immediate contact with actual families could nonetheless be very complicated, however. The purposes and goals of the institution were clearly presented; the question was how to structure the required meeting in practice?

Individual contact was limited in the early kindergartens, both with the mother and with the child. In spite of the frequent meetings, there was surely still a greater potential for distance and preservation of one's own integrity in the froebelian method of working than in the psychological paradigm which has replaced it.

4. The froebelian discourse is replaced by modern, scientific views and language

During the 1930s, criticism of the froebelian dominance was growing in the Swedish movement. The froebel pedagogy was considered to have become rigid, and it was associated with authoritarian patterns and a more conservative society.

In Europe, during the 1930s and 40s, there appeared an effort to create a new model for upbringing – the old one had obviously failed. The child now occupied a stronger position. The child had been individualized; children are different from one another, and they could be observed, measured, studied, and tested. The child was objectified and demystified. Psychology supplied new possibilities for understanding the child's behavior. Work was now formulated on psychological grounds, and this also became the basis for approaching the family. Legitimacy of knowledge, with normative concepts based upon extensive child studies, replaced an idealistic ambition for change – to work for the Cause – in the relationship towards the family. New groups of families and different social recruitment and situations also influenced this reorientation.

Education of the parents was transformed into contact with them – and the Child pushes the Mother aside
Contact with the family became individualized. The parents successively entered the pre-school institutions. Among other things, the concept of "vestibule contact" was formulated at the end of the period being studied. Contact with the parents no longer had the great symbolic value and depth given to it by froebelian doctrine. The more neutral and uncharacterized "child" had alone taken over the central position.

These changes took place under dramatic circumstances. They involved not only transformations in the profession and the work of its practicioners, but also a loss of identity for those who had designed that profession – and the Swedish kindergarten – after a froebelian model.

With two new "modern" and scientifically oriented seminars in 1934 and 1936 (in Stockholm), and with a change of the name of the former Froebel Union to The Association of Swedish Kindergarten Teachers in 1944, the froebelian period of Swedish child education history came to an

end.

Ellen and Maria Moberg, and together with them many people never mentioned, started the great revolution. These forerunners framed a working field, designed a profession, and shaped the corresponding kindergarten teacher training schools. They introduced a social-educational learning environment especially directed towards younger children. A totally new alternative for caring and education of pre-school children was presented, with a radically different way of working with the children. They started something to which their followers would later also contribute a number of comprehensive innovations, each uniquely shaped by the times of its own particular introduction.

The aims – of child education under professional leadership – are still today controversial and much debated. They stretch from an early romantic, idealistic picture of childhood and its possibilities to the scientific, rationalistic attitude found in modern society; today, the years of childhood and its goals are often formulated in economic terms. Childhood has become an economic debate – and a controversial question. How can we organize it, and how much childhood can we afford?

This picture is far from the froebelian vision: that knowledge about childhood and its value should lead to a better growth environment in the family, as well as in the institutions that are set up for the children.

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